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House of Representatives

The House met at 10 a.m.

The Chaplain, Rev. James David Ford, D.D., offered the following prayer:

"For the beauty of the Earth,
For the glory of the skies,
For the love which from our birth
Over and around us lies;
Lord of all, to Thee we raise
This our prayer of grateful praise."

We are thankful, O God, for the beauty that surrounds us and for the grace which makes us whole. May our lives never become so cluttered that we fail to see Your divine glory in the world and Your perfect love which is freely given to us and to every person. Bless us, O God, this day and every day, we pray. Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER. Will the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. GREEN) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. GREEN of Wisconsin led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

IMPRISONED CHINESE PASTOR XU YONGZE

(Mr. DELAY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. DELAY. Mr. Speaker, this week marks the second anniversary of the imprisonment of Pastor Xu Yongze by

the Communist authorities in China. Today also marks the fifth time I have come to the floor to urge the Chinese Government to release this decent man of God.

Last week, I met with the Chinese Ambassador to once again raise my disappointment with China's refusal to release Pastor Xu, who is often called the "Billy Graham" of China. Unfortunately, the Chinese still cling to the belief that Pastor Xu is a cult leader because he believes in a judgment day. But, Mr. Speaker, the belief in a judgment day is a basic tenet of Christianity, a belief held by billions of Christians around the world, including myself. Now that would be one big cult.

Pastor Xu is a respected and honorable man and one incredibly brave Christian. So once again I ask President Jiang Zemin to release Pastor Xu, as I humbly ask my colleagues and fellow Americans to remember Pastor Xu in their prayers.

ELECTION OF MEMBER TO COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Democratic Caucus, I offer a privileged resolution (H. Res. 119) and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

HOUSE RESOLUTION 119

Resolved, That the following named Member be, and is hereby, elected to the following standing committee of the House of Representatives:

JANICE SCHAKOWSKY, to the Committee on Government Reform.

The resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

STRENGTHEN MEDICARE WITH THE SURPLUS

(Ms. DELAURO asked and was given permission to address the House for 1

minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, when Medicare was created in 1965, fewer than half of all American seniors had health care coverage. Today 99 percent are covered. Medicare has enabled millions of seniors to live their retirement years with dignity, financial independence, and peace of mind.

Unless we prepare for the baby boom's strain on the system, Medicare will go bankrupt in the year 2008, only 9 years away. The Democratic proposal for the Federal surplus would use 15 percent of that surplus to bolster Medicare, to strengthen Medicare. This plan will extend the life of Medicare by a decade.

In contrast, the Republican plan is to spend that surplus on a one-time, trillion-dollar tax break while Medicare withers on the vine. It is irresponsible. Giving tax breaks while Medicare dissolves is akin to fiddling while Rome burns.

Mr. Speaker, we should use the surplus to strengthen Medicare. This is a responsible plan for our current seniors and for future generations.

VOTE AGAINST UNION-ONLY LABOR CONTRACTS

(Mr. BALLENGER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. BALLENGER. Mr. Speaker, the President and the Vice President have worked diligently in the past few years to link Federal projects to union-only construction firms. Unfortunately, the Los Angeles Unified School District is following suit by proposing a new major \$2.4 billion school construction initiative, using only unionized contractors.

I say this is unfortunate because union-only contracts increase the cost of construction projects by limiting competition, which results in higher

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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